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Mixed results in the early experience of a place-based European Union former program implemented in Campania

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Abstract

The social and economical development from the exploitation of local resources is a newly objective pursued in the European Union cohesion policy, of which some early example can be found in the 2007-2013 programs. In the metropolitan area of Naples this strategy has been consolidated in the “PIU Europa” and Jessica programs where the polycentric framework chosen by the regional territorial planning has meant that the so-called medium-sized cities emerge from their peripheral condition, to be considered poles supporting local and regional development and competitiveness. This article is an account of research on this subject carried out at the University of Naples thanks to a cooperation agreement with the municipality of Castellammare di Stabia aimed at supporting local community in the program PIU Europa especially for the regeneration of the city waterfront.

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1. Introduction

The social and economical development from the exploitation of local resources is a newly objective pursued in the European Union cohesion policy, including former programs aimed to regional development and to the spread of growth all over Europe. Some early example can be found in the 2007-2013 programs.

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In the area of Naples such a strategy has been consolidated in the PIU Europa program where the polycentric framework chosen by the regional territorial planning has meant that the so-called medium-sized cities emerge from their peripheral condition, to be considered poles supporting local development and competitiveness (Rossi, 2007).

The Urban Integration Program “PIU Europa” aims to significantly change the living conditions of Campania’s towns, improving their attractiveness, in order to turn them into poles of the regional network for competitiveness.

With the exception of Naples, whose integration seems more related to a compromise solution rather than genuine consistency with the program, the action has involved all communities with at least 50,000 inhabitants that, unless the provincial capitals, are all included in the current perimeter of the newly formed metropolitan city. The program corresponds to an advanced experiment of decentralization of Structural Funds management to medium-sized cities.

Although it is debatable whether these cities actually correspond to strategic centres of development and how funded projects fully correspond to the same purpose (Moccia & Sgobbo, 2013a), we cannot deny the positive developments of the regional consultation table where they came face to face 19 Campania’s cities evolving in the planning process thanks to the interaction arisen. Another quality of the program is its established procedure according to a sequence of stages in which they are in turn involved different local authorities. This is to overcome the failure that typically characterizes the processes that require the proactive and collaborative participation of several stakeholders.



Fig. 1. Waterfront of Castellammare di Stabia: industrial warehouses along via De Gasperi

Finally the approach that distinguishes the PIU Europa plans to tailor solutions and projects to the characteristics of each territory by extracting and aggregating preferences and knowledge of local actors (Barca, 2009), but also the respect of some fundamental rules trans-territorial: to innovate local institutions according to the principles established at European level; to use criteria and evaluation metrics universally recognized and able to develop an ongoing debate on the results; to try to overcome inequalities in favor of actions effectively inclusive (Guarini, 2013).

This article is an account of research on this subject carried out at the University of Naples thanks to a scientific cooperation agreement with the municipality of Castellammare di Stabia aimed at supporting local community in the program PIU Europa especially for the regeneration of the city waterfront.

The project's results were somewhat limited as forcefully emerged the difficulty and distrust with which you are forced to face up in certain regions in acceptance of modern and inclusive rules (Mangoni & Sgobbo, 2013).

2. The PIU Europa program of Castellammare di Stabia

The research (coordinator prof. F. D. Moccia), in which I participated for the urban design and policies support, covered the waterfront of Castellammare, which, for a long part, is today a deprived area due to the presence of many decommissioned industrial warehouses directly built on the beach (fig. 1). When they were designed, this part of the coast was far from the city, close, however, with the Torre Annunziata costs that a development policy based on heavy industry had earmarked for productive purposes. In the middle the mouth of Sarno river.



Fig. 2. Water's kiosks "Acqua della Madonna" installed along le port basin

In this perspective of denial of the relationship with the natural territory in which the sea is only a resource for waste disposing and the inherent tourist potential of the places one of the threats to be resisted, the free spaces left by industrial warehouses are occupied by public housing or anonymous private buildings (Sgobbo, 2015). The failure of an industrialization plan based on the steel industry and whose only real example of place-based strategy is in some episode of food industry related to agricultural production of Nocera-Sarno plain, has left building skeletons and a deep social malaise (Flora & Arbolino, 2013).



Fig. 3. The water's kiosks area planned transformation

For these areas, become obsolete because of the development of maritime transport technologies, and because of the world redistribution of industrial activities (Al Naib, 1995), the bottom-up experience of PIU Europa could

represent an innovative approach giving some hope compared to the recidivist failure which a blind and ideological strategy of confirming the industrial development had condemned Torre Annunziata (Viati, 2005).

The Municipality responds to the challenge of the program with an exceptional effectiveness creating a special office in which concentrates all the best available expertise. Rapidly it is then outlined the strategy of intervention and reached agreement with several local bodies involved. The consequent actions are reported on a plan, where the territory involved in the program is divided in two workspaces, and shared with the population in many participative meetings. The first section covers the old town and the port. Here the planned actions focused on the recovery and enhancement of places beloved by the citizens of Castellammare and that mark the moments of social life: the extension and doubling of the waterfront historic promenade; the expansion of the municipal gardens (Sgobbo, 2011). It was also planned the enhancement of traditional activities such as the many springs of thermal and healthy water that provide the raw materials to the kiosks installed along the port basin (fig. 2). In this case the place-based strategy is reflected in the transformation of these improvised kiosks in functional structures that respect the hygiene standards required by law and landscape quality (fig. 3).



Fig. 4. The planned regeneration of waterfront and beach

The second section, which deals with the regeneration of the waterfront along via De Gasperi, is that for which we met the greatest difficulties. The plan is the relocation of existing industrial warehouses from the beach, on whose site is designed a large park where to install the recreational services in support of the seaside and, at the same time, to develop an extension of the historic waterfront promenade. The removed warehouses would be converted into residential and commercial buildings erected in the wide spaces available on the opposite side of Via De Gasperi. Here the landowners would have to transfer part of their property in exchange for development rights to be exercised on the rest. Finally two large areas, currently occupied by the old city sewage treatment plant and a group crumbling sheds, always looking onto the Via de Gasperi, would be transformed in a tourist district.

From the environmental point of view the implementation of the project makes it possible to recover to the beach and for equipped public green an area of approx. 80,000 sq m that would be added to a sports area of 16,500 sq m. The city park near the railway station is about 25,000 sq m; the Sarno River Park is 45,000 sq m. Finally about 165,000 sq m of urban land would be converted for environmental equipment (Moccia, 2014).

3. Some limits of place-based development policy

Between the main problems encountered in the experience of PIU Europa of Castellammare di Stabia there is the difficulty of understanding and to accept the effectiveness of planning solutions based on the transfer of development rights. In the Italian law the gradual separation of landownership by development rights has led to consider development rights as an asset arising from the soil, but not necessarily to be exerted on the soil itself. This

leads to the principle that if the right to build is an autonomous economic good it is freely tradable on the market. The idea was conceived in the context of environmental policies in countries where there are no constraints that would break the property rights, such as the US (Johnston & Madison, 1997).



Fig. 5. Waterfront of Castellammare in the thesis of P. D'Apice: backside of Marina di Stabia. Tutor F.D. Moccia, Co-tutor A. Sgobbo

Negotiations with the warehouses owners took place in group and individual sessions during which emerged their strong opposition to the project developed by the municipality, within the university research, for PIU Europa.

Briefly the owners reject the transferring of development rights for two reasons: the need to reach agreement with other actors having to give up the possibility of completely autonomous action; the necessity to completely demolish their crumbling properties (which obviously followed the need of funds investing).



Fig. 6. Waterfront of Castellammare in the thesis of P. D'Apice: backside of Marina di Stabia. Tutor F.D. Moccia, Co-tutor A. Sgobbo

On the contrary, they propose a solution consisting in renovation of existing buildings with mostly make-up work. They offer to open some turned toward the beach and some (poor) public space, in exchange for the opportunity to transform industrial warehouses in houses and stores. Even the council of Castellammare, however,

appeared unable to carry on resolutely the designed solution. Behind this the fear to disappoint their electorate if they had pursued the tourist and landscape solution instead of the conservation for industrial use. This condition stemmed from the strong influence on local politicians by trade unions representing several hundred former workers of companies operating in the currently closed industries of Castellammare. This even more if we take into account the Fincantieri crisis that for some months now animated the local chronicles on the possible closure of what was probably the last real local industrial activities, which have survived only thanks to public property and the welfare regime which is kept. The result is a somewhat ambiguous behavior that, from the design point of view was expressed in the intention to annul parts of the proposal, especially where strongest were labor disputes in progress.

This, however, clashed with a clear need for which even the few owners willing to invest were well aware: the potential tourist demand, despite all obvious natural beauty and history available, would certainly be lost in the case of a compromise which did not include the full environmental rehabilitation of the waterfront.

4. Conclusion

The case of Castellammare highlights the limits of the place-based solutions where the proposed solutions, although adapted to local vocations, require the application of objectively fair rules conflicting with the aspirations of a part of civil society which, though numerically marginal, have a say on it.

All the more so where the public-private synergies that we wish to encourage cannot rely either on the existence of local investors or on the ability of politicians to fight in a modern way the privileges acquired (Sgobbo, 2014).

The issue becomes insurmountable if local bodies appointed to manage the process fail to develop appropriate involvement of common citizens (Moccia & Sgobbo, 2013b).

This, in the case of Castellammare, we tried with conferences, moments of public communication and towns exhibitions in which, moreover, were exposed design solutions developed by undergraduates of the Department. These, in fact, we thought could catch the imaginary of citizens in order to give the proposed solution the strength to overtake the individual interests.

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